

BUTLER COUNTY

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Council Priorities

1. Quality of child care

Increase high quality childcare centers in Butler County for children (ages 0-3) for working parents/parents in job training.

2. Family Resource Center

Increase funding for Family Resource Centers in order to increase the number of services and classes that will promote physical and mental well-being for at-risk families in Butler County.

3. Substance abuse prevention

Continue a substance abuse prevention coalition which will promote collaboration among community agencies, the school system, the Children's Policy Council, and other organizations in order to educate and decrease substance abuse in Butler County.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Lack of high quality childcare centers for 0-3 for working parents/parents in job training

Action Steps

- 1) Form a focus group to locate and apply for potential funding.
- 2) Increase knowledge and awareness of the importance of early learning by forming a collaboration of community agencies to distribute Kid stuff Parenting Kits to parents.
- 3) Seek local community commitments and donations from civic organizations, individuals, and businesses.

Increase the number of high quality pre-k early childhood educational programs for 4 year-olds (based on the criteria established by the Alabama Office of School Readiness) in order to ensure that preschoolers are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten

Action Steps

- 1) Seek and support funding for high quality pre-kindergarten programs based on the criteria for preschool education established by the Alabama Office of School Readiness.
- 2) Support preschool literacy efforts of Head Start, the Butler County School System, private schools, and the YMCA.
- 3) Promote public awareness of the importance of high quality preschool educational programs.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

The need to expand the Career Path Program

Action Steps

- 1) Increase the number of participants by making the community more knowledgeable about the program.
- 2) Participating Council Agencies will make referrals to the program.

Lack of transportation in Butler County

Action Steps

- 1) The Children's Policy Council will look at the programs in Covington and Baldwin County and how these began and are maintained.
- 2) The Children's Policy Council will research transportation and coordinate with all agencies to seek funding.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Increase the percentage of third grade students on grade level in reading as required by the No Child Left Behind Act and the Governor's Office

Action Steps

- 1) Seek and support funding for the after-school and summer academic programs for grades K-3.
- 2) Collaborate with faith based groups and churches to inform parents of the importance of becoming involved in the education of their child.
- 3) Encourage members of the Children's Policy Council to become aware and to support the Alabama Reading Initiative and the Alabama Reading First Initiative.

Decrease the high school dropout rate in Butler County

Action Steps

- 1) Seek and support funding for alternative school.
- 2) Seek and support funding for social worker placements within the schools and the Butler County Education and Community Learning Center (family resource center).
- 3) Seek and support funding for after-school and summer tutoring classes for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Births to unmarried teens

Action Steps

- 1) Continue Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program in local school system.
- 2) Raise awareness of pregnancy prevention programs by working in conjunction with local Health Department, other community agencies, and media.
- 3) Continue to explore funding opportunities for pregnancy prevention programs.

Continue to develop and promote Family Resource Center (Butler County Education and Community Learning Center)

Action Steps

- 1) Provide parenting skills to promote physical and mental well-being.
- 2) Establish referral system throughout the county that targets at-risk families.
- 3) Increase funding opportunities for Family Resource Center.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Increase participation in existing parenting involvement programs

Action Steps

- 1) Support the Butler County Education and Community Learning Center (family resource center) to increase participation in parenting education programs.
- 2) Seek and support funding request for parenting education programs.
- 3) Bring all "partners to the table" to promote PTA participation and parenting classes at all schools.

Increase parenting skills for targeted populations (teenage parents, divorce parents, court mandated parents, new parents, etc.)

Action Steps

- 1) Distribute Kid Stuff Parenting Kits to new parents in Butler County through community agencies.
- 2) Seek and support funding requests to develop a parenting program for meeting the special needs of teenage parents.
- 3) Assist in communicating the message that all parents are to be held responsible for their children's actions.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Underage drinking and drug prevention in Butler County

Action Steps

- 1) Start a substance abuse prevention coalition.
- 2) Incorporate education/prevention information for students in Butler County.
- 3) All of county law enforcement working together with coalition to enforce laws.

Physical and sexual abuse of children

Action Steps

- 1) Incorporate educational prevention information in all school settings.
- 2) Support Safe Harbor.
- 3) Educate the public of the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect and the proper procedure for reporting abuse.

Policy Recommendations

- Increase the number of high quality pre-k early childhood educational programs for 4 year-olds (based on the criteria established by the Alabama Office of School Readiness) in order to ensure that preschoolers are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten.
- Increase funding for abstinence and pregnancy prevention programs.
- Increase funding for family resource center to provide increased parenting information.
- All children (0-5) in Alabama are provided opportunities to participate in programs, which will fully develop them emotionally, socially, physically, cognitively, and linguistically.
- All four year-olds in Alabama are provided the opportunity to participate in a high quality and developmentally appropriate voluntary preschool program (at no cost to parents) in order to ensure school readiness for kindergarten.
- All parents will be aware of their responsibility for helping their child learn, of their responsibility for their child's actions, and for providing their child with the support needed to be successful in life.
- Decrease births to unmarried teens.
- Decrease the high school dropout rate in Butler County.
- Increase participation in existing parenting involvement programs.
- Increase parenting skills for targeted population.